

# East Bay Life

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## The Bridge Fiasco – A regatta that felt almost normal



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICK BOWEN

Tom D'Albora's Coconut (left) and David Schwartz's Mischief (right), sailing downwind during the June 7 Bridge Fiasco.

## Twenty Hundred Club hosts the first regatta on the bay since the start of the Covid crisis

BY NICK BOWEN

The Twenty Hundred Club has a reputation for hosting adventurous sailboat races, and on Sunday, June 7, they again pushed the envelope with a new race called the "Bridge Fiasco." This race is based on a similar race in San Francisco Bay. The rules are simple: start the race just south of Prudence Island and sail under each of the three bay bridges in any order: the Newport Bridge, the Jamestown Bridge, and the Mt. Hope Bridge.

The format of the race was pursuit-style, which means your handicap is taken at the start of the race. The highest-rated boat, Kestral, sailed by Mark Franklin, started at 9:05 and the lowest-rated boat, Resolute IV, started at 10:31.

There were 21 boats in four classes; 15 spinnaker boats and eight cruising-class boats. This was a great turnout considering this was the first regatta on Narragansett Bay during the COVID crisis. Many boaters were very enthusiastic to get out on the water.

The winds were from the north about 12 to 15 knots at the start, and high tide was right around the time when the first boats were starting. The race was 27 nautical miles, and with generally north-south routes, this meant 13 nautical miles of downwind sailing (with following currents)

and 13 miles of tacking upwind against some very strong currents. Having to tack for half the race meant the boats sailed about 40 nautical miles.

Ninety percent of the fleet decided to sequence the bridges in the following order: Mt Hope, Newport, then Jamestown. David Schwartz, sailing Mischief, was the fastest around the course finishing in 4 hours and 23 minutes for a win in Class A Spinnaker. He reported that he never saw less than 10 knots of wind during the day. All other boats on the podium sailed this sequence.

There were three lone wolf boats worth noting. The boat epiphany, sailed by Nick Bowen, started with Jamestown, then went to Newport. This worked really well until they got into the upper bay after noon and the wind started dying and strong outgoing currents slowed the trip to Mt Hope Bridge.

The boat spirit, sailed by EC Helme, did the Jamestown Bridge second, and they got caught in strong currents after the Newport Bridge. The boat Whalayed, sailed by John Whaley, decided to transit from the Newport to Jamestown Bridge by going around Beavertail. Although this was only 1.5 nautical miles longer, it added a lot of upwind tacking. These lone wolf strategies cost each of these boats a full hour.

Overall the race was a great start to the



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Nick Bowen's epiphany passes under the Mt. Hope Bridge during the Bridge Fiasco.

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